

Секция «Современные лингвистические исследования разноуровневых единиц языка:
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Zoom-related neologisms represented in virtual discourse

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There are so many people struggling to describe the new coronavirus era we are living in. The copywriters, the journalists, the content creators and just habitants themselves — new words and phrases have vaulted into everyday use, becoming part of the mainstream lexicon due to Covid-19.

The goal of this report is to analyze some slang neologisms that appeared during the pandemic and are related to Zoom application. They describe phenomena happening in the virtual space and things connected directly with Zoom applications.

The novelty of our research lies in the fact that these words are extremely new and not studied closely yet but at the same time, they pervaded in everyday life.

The undertaken research included a few stages: compiling a list of slang neologisms related to Zoom application, analyzing their meanings and making conclusions based on the retrieved information.

According to Collins dictionary, a neologism is a new word or expression in a language, or a new meaning for an existing word or expression. According to Merriam-Webster dictionary, slang is informal nonstandard vocabulary composed typically of coinages, arbitrarily changed words, and extravagant, forced, or facetious figures of speech. The words under analysis are both. As neologisms, they cover new phenomena (semantic neologisms) and as slang words they are characterized by vividness.

Let us introduce a few examples and illustrate their usage.

Zoom: to video-chat via a web application. Most people have gone from never having heard of Zoom to verbing it regularly.

This verb is formed by means of conversion (the formation of a new word by bringing a stem of this word into a different formal paradigm), namely verbalization of the noun denoting an application.

Example: Let's zoom and throw a party.

Zoom fatigue: the exhaustion caused by the amount of information processed face-to-face on Zoom without any non-verbal cues. Zoom fatigue ties into the larger phenomenon of “pandemic fatigue”: months into the pandemic and we are feeling the emotional, social, and psychological loss.

We can observe the process of analogy in action when the expression “pandemic fatigue” serves as a model for creating a new item.

Ex.: It is even possible Zoom fatigue will abate once people learn to navigate the mental tangle video chatting can cause.

Zoom gloom: the feeling of sluggishness, drowsiness, or laziness after spending hours indoors on Zoom.

The reduplicative compound is created by doubling the stems accompanied by consonant interchange.

Ex.: I have so many upcoming assignments but don't feel like looking at a screen one minute more after being on Zoom for the past 8 hours; this Zoom gloom is hitting me today.

Zoom mom: a mother who is constantly using Zoom for work, her children's schooling, or to chat.

A stone-wall combination consisting of a substantivized adjective and a noun expresses the relations between the field of activity and the agent. It is also based on analogy with the already existing unit "soccer mom" (a mother who spends a lot of time taking her children to activities such as music classes, sports, etc. It is often used to refer to a type of middle-class mother).

Ex.: If the updated back to school plans aren't released soon, the Zoom moms may revolt.

Zoomtown: a place where housing sales are booming due to buyers who work remotely and are willing to live farther from the office. The original unit that served as the basis for analogy was "a boomtown" (a town that has grown very rapidly because of sudden prosperity).

This compound word is neutral (according to the way the stems are joined), proper (by its structure), subordinative (as far as the relations between the elements are concerned), syntactic (by the arrangement of the elements), and idiomatic. Thus, we can say that the item in question represents the most typical features of English compounds.

Ex.: The realtor convinced us to look at several homes in a nearby Zoom town, and I couldn't help but imagine an idyllic life in the suburbs.

Zoombomb: to disrupt a virtual meeting with various offensive images or words. The original unit was "to photobomb" (ruin a photograph by appearing in the image without the photographer's knowledge, often in some dramatic or comical way).

The compound verb formed by analogy and it is idiomatic.

Ex.: She was about to give her presentation when someone Zoombombed the meeting eating Doritos unmuted in a crunchy orange square filled with Cheeto-dust.

Zumping: a breakup with someone over a video conferencing service.

The word is formed by blending (Zoom + dumping) and extends the semantic group with the meaning of abandonment: Skumping (Skype + dumping); FaceTumping (FaceTime + dumping).

Ex.: Never have I ever imagined experiencing zumping.

Zutor: someone who can take over parental demands, help children with online homework and take them outside.

The word is formed by blending (Zoom + tutor).

Ex.: The role of a Zutor is a tutor, a nanny, and an angel for a parent.

In conclusion, it would appear that these new words and word combinations have been coined to help to talk about the unprecedented times we are experiencing. The units, largely created by means of analogy and blending, have helped people and brands make sense and become everything from hashtags to memes to flashpoints for connecting people. However, their future seems unpredictable as such words have the tendency to disappear when the situation they outline does not exist any longer.

References

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